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LB 305

teachers in the state. How can we do something significant and sustainable if our first commitment is not to raise taxes? One suggestion was to use...to use money heretofore tabbed property tax relief, about \$30 million in each of the next two years; but as you know, the money is now gone. And even if this money were available, we come back to asking how significant, how sustainable a solution would that be? In the committee's view, that money, even if available, would not allow significant sustainable salary increases. Number three, do something that requires a mixture of state and local resources, recognizing that we value local control but there must be a local commitment also. The state has to focus on statewide policy to attract and retain teachers. Whatever that policy is, it has to include accountability. We currently have an equalization formula whereby we target funds only to public schools. We do not pay funds directly to teachers. We do not pursue programs that do not attack the problem. We acknowledge that if the solution we pursue costs money, then we identify that cost and propose a means to pay for it. This is the proposal that the Education Committee recommends, it is LB 305. The fourth option we had, do what the Teachers Salary Task Force recommended, provide state funds to schools for salary supplements to teachers. The state would pay 100 percent of these salary supplements, regardless of whether the local district had the means to increase salaries. This would be outside the formula and the cost is about twice that of LB 305. To summarize: We had four options at the beginning of this session. Those options represent a range of choices. Option number one, doing nothing costs nothing, at least in terms of immediate appropriations from the General Fund. Option number four, the Teachers Salary Task Force recommendation costs between \$103 million and \$114 million each year over the next five years. We could spend nothing or we could spend more than \$100 million a year. The Education Committee proposes a middle path. The committee's recommendation to you combines state and local resources. It will address the need to recruit new teachers and retain veteran teachers. It respects the desire for local control but it also requires local commitment for districts that choose to take advantage of the proposal, and its estimated cost is between \$32 million and \$59 million per year. I believe that there's a compelling case for LB 305. I understand that the bill's